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ART. II. — *Sermons preached upon Several Occasions.*

By ROBERT SOUTH, D. D., Prebendary of Westminster, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. A New Edition, including the Posthumous Discourses. Philadelphia : Sorin & Ball. 4 vols. 8vo.

No explorer of the thorny tracts of theology can ever forget his exhilaration of spirit on first reading the sermons of Dr. South, the shrewdest, sharpest, bitterest, and wittiest of English divines. His character, formed by a curious interpenetration of strong prejudices and great powers, and colored by the circumstances of his age and position, is one of the most peculiar in English literature, and, as displayed in his works, repays the most assiduous study. In some points he reminds us of Sydney Smith, though distinguished from him by many striking individualities, and utterly opposed to him in political sentiment and principle. He is a grand specimen of the old Tory; and he enforced his Toryism with a courage, heartiness, and wealth of intellectual resources, to which the warmest radical could hardly refuse admiration and respect.

South was born in 1633. He was the son of an eminent London merchant. In 1647, he was admitted a king's scholar at Westminster, at the period when Dr. Busby was master of the school. On the day of the execution of King Charles the First, or, to use his own words, "on that black and eternally infamous day of the king's murder, an hour or two before his sacred head was cut off," the Doctor prayed for the king by name, while reading Latin prayers at the school. In 1651, he entered Oxford, at the same time that John Locke was admitted, — the future champion of the divine right of kings, in company with the future champion of freedom. In 1655, he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts, and wrote a copy of Latin verses congratulating Cromwell on the peace made with the Dutch. Although this was a college exercise, and the theme probably selected for him and not by him, it must have been a most galling recollection in after years, when he was writing down the great Protector as an "execrable monster," and comparing him to Baal and Beelzebub. At college he seems to have been a severe student, both in the acquisition of knowledge

and in the training of his faculties for the gladiatorial contests of professional life. He was ordained by one of the deprived bishops, in 1658 ; and soon won the good-will of the Presbyterians by a sermon directed against the Independents. In 1660, he was made University Orator, and in July of the same year he preached his celebrated discourse, *The Scribe Instructed*, before the king's commissioners, who met at Oxford soon after the restoration, for the visitation of the University. South at this time was twenty-seven years old ; and the sermon, in respect to style, arrangement, and strength of intellect and character, is one of his greatest and most characteristic productions, and indicates both the bias and energy of his mind. It especially displays that masterly arrangement of his matter, that thorough comprehension of his subject, and that vitality and vividness of expression, which have given his sermons with some a place in literature even higher than in divinity.

The object of the discourse is to set forth the qualifications of the Christian preacher, and to show by ridicule and argument the absurdity and wickedness involved in assuming to be a minister of the word without competent ability, knowledge, and preparation. He especially insists on intellectual qualifications, and their improvement by habitual exercise. Defining divinity as "a doctrine treating of the nature, attributes, and works of the great God, as he stands related to rational creatures, and the way how rational creatures may serve, worship, and enjoy him," he asks if a doctrine of that "depth, that height, that vast compass, grasping within it all the perfections and dimensions of human science, does not worthily claim all the preparations whereby the wit and industry of man can fit him for it?" He opposes levity and stupidity as the two faults of most sermon-mongers, — those who put their prayers in such a dress as if they did not "supplicate, but compliment Almighty God," and those who lie "grovelling on the ground with a dead and contemptible flatness," passing off dulness as a mark of regeneration. The most splendid part of the sermon is the passage relating to the eloquence of the Bible, in which South enforces the duty of the minister to employ rich and significant expression in conveying the truths of the gospel. As he fears that this may bring down the opposition of such as call speaking "coherently upon any sacred

subject an offering of strange fire, and account the being pertinent even the next door to the being profane," he adduces Scripture authority for magnificence of language, and boldly pronounces the Bible a system of the best rhetoric, as well as a body of religion.

"As the highest things require the highest expressions, so we shall find nothing in Scripture so high in itself, but it is reached and sometimes overtopped by the sublimity of the expression."

The passions he deems to have been more powerfully described by the Hebrew than the heathen poets.

"Where do we read," he asks, "such strange risings and fallings, now the faintings and languishings, now the terrors of astonishment, venting themselves in such high amazing strains, as in Psalm lxxvii.? Or where did we ever find sorrow flowing forth in such a natural prevailing pathos, as in the lamentations of Jeremy? One would think that every letter was written with a tear, every word was the noise of a breaking heart; that the author was a man compacted of sorrows, disciplined to grief from his infancy, one who never breathed but in sighs, nor spoke but in a groan."

He pounces upon Politian, for saying that he abstained from reading the Scriptures for fear they would spoil his style, and calls him a blockhead as well as an atheist, — one who had "as small a gust for the elegancies of expression as the sacredness of the matter." There are few clergymen who would not find the reading of this sermon profitable, and few parishioners who would not be grateful if its advice were more generally followed.

No one could have heard or read this discourse without perceiving that a powerful and daring character was rising in the church, — one who could enforce and defend his doctrines and discipline with all the energy of a fanatic and all the acuteness of a philosopher. South was soon after made domestic chaplain to Clarendon. In January, 1662–3, he preached before King Charles the Second, at Whitehall, on occasion of the anniversary of the "execrable murder of King Charles the First, of glorious memory," his celebrated sermon, *Pretence of Conscience no Excuse for Rebellion*. This is a perfect shriek of loyalty; and although South's discourses are all more or less sprinkled with bitter allusions to the political and religious conduct of the

Parliamentarians, it is in this sermon that his zeal and rage rise to their most portentous excesses. He loses here that quiet command of his hatred, which makes the gibes and jests directed against the Puritans in *The Scribe Instructed* so galling and effective. He dedicates the sermon to the "never-dying memory" of Charles the First, and adds, as a precious piece of history, that he was "*causelessly* rebelled against, inhumanly imprisoned, and at length barbarously murdered before the gates of his own palace, by the worst of men and the most obliged of subjects."

The sermon itself is well worthy of the dedication. The fiery spirit of the preacher throws off at times splendid specimens of vehement rhetoric,

"that bound and blaze along
Their devious course, magnificently wrong";

but the whole sermon seems at this day rather a caricature than a panegyric of the monarch;—a man sedulous of propriety rather than virtue, whose misfortune it was to embody all the characteristics of political crime but its energies, and who, in his dealings with his adversaries, trusted to systematic falsehood as the means by which in the end he could "feed fat the hungry grudges of his smiling rancor and his cringing pride." Charles is often represented, or rather misrepresented, as the perfection of kings and men. But South tells us, that he was a David, a saint, a king. He had so many excellences, that he would have deserved a kingdom, had he not inherited one. His genius was so controlling, that in every science he attempted he did not so much study as reign. His writings have such a commanding and majestic pathos, that they seem to have been written with a sceptre instead of a pen. He was pious beyond expression; as eminent for frequenting the temple as Solomon was for building one; could defend his religion as a king, dispute for it as a divine, and die for it as a martyr. If ever the lion and the lamb dwelt together, it was in his royal breast. He was, indeed, a prince whose virtues were as prodigious as his sufferings, and "a father of his country, if but for this only, that he was the father of such a son." It is but justice to say, that Charles the Second had not at this time fully developed his large capacities for knavery and licentiousness, nor attempted to barter away the rights

and interests of his people to pay the expenses of his debaucheries.

The persons who arrayed themselves against Charles the First were the most unnatural and godless of traitors. In the first stage of their rebellion, they invented the "covenant," like those who are said to have made a "covenant with hell and an agreement with death." This was the most solemn piece of perjury, the most fatal engine against the church, the bane of monarchy, the greatest snare of souls, and mystery of iniquity, that ever was hammered out by the wit and wickedness of man. The king was murdered by the refuse of his people, the scum of the nation, — that is, by what at that time was the uppermost and basest part of it. Like Actæon, he was torn by a pack of bloodhounds. The difference between being conquered and slain by another king, and being killed by infamous rebels, was the difference between being torn by a lion and being eat up with vermin. His sufferings it is no blasphemy to compare with Christ's, though his murderers were worse than the Jews. With devilish ingenuity, they proposed various ways of putting him to death, all methods which either their malice could suggest, or their own guilt deserve. After his death, they tried to assassinate his fame and butcher his reputation, — to such a height of tyranny did the remorseless malice of these embittered rebels rise. They searched his dead body to see if it was not infected with some disgraceful disease. But such maladies were confined to his murderers, to such men as Clement and Peters. The body of Charles had none of the ruins and genteel rottenness of modern debauchery. It was firm and clear like his conscience ; he fell like the cedar, no less fragrant than tall and stately. All who opposed Charles are treated by South with remorseless severity. Sir Harry Vane is that worthy knight who was executed on Tower-hill ; Milton is "the Latin advocate, who, like a blind adder, has spit so much venom on the king's person and cause."

It is curious, in reading this sermon, and some of Milton's prose, to note the extraordinary virulence and remorselessness with which the paper wars of the time were conducted. Controversialists represented each other more as fiends than men ; and mutual denunciation foamed into madness. South writes with the rage and impatience of a man who would sweep, if

he could, the enemies of church and king to perdition, with one wave of his pen. He says, "I do well to be angry." Milton's rage is deeper and more condensed, and prompts more awful denunciations. Thus, at the end of the sublime prose hymn which concludes his early work, *Of Reformation in England*, he prays that those "who, by impairing and diminution of the true faith, the distresses and servitude of their country, aspire to high dignity, rule, and promotion here, after a shameful end in this life (which God grant them), shall be thrown down eternally into the darkest and deepest gulf of hell, where, under the despiteful control, the trample and spurn of all the other damned, that in the anguish of their torture shall have no other ease than to exercise a raving and bestial tyranny over them as their slaves and negroes, they shall remain in that plight for ever, the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot and downtrodden vassals of perdition." The whole royalist body, in the modest excesses of their rhetorical execrations, could not have gone beyond this determined and terrible invective. There is nothing in South's writings which approaches it in stern and superhuman, if not inhuman, severity.

In November, 1662, South preached at St. Paul's his sermon on *Man created in the Image of God*. This we deem, on the whole, his greatest production; it stands, with that of Chillingworth on the *Form and Spirit of Godliness*, in the very front rank of sermons. It is, perhaps, the best and fairest expression of South's mind, considered apart from his inveterate prejudices, and indicates the capacity of his intellect and imagination in the region of pure thought. In this discourse, he draws a portrait of the ideal man, as he supposes him to have existed in paradise, and states what constitutes perfection in the understanding, will, passions, and affections. The vigor and clearness of thought and expression in this noble treatise on human nature would alone be sufficient to place South high in the sliding scale of English prose-writers. There runs through the discourse an air of majestic pathos and regret, arising from the contrast between the real and the ideal man. Several sentences remind us of Pascal. South, too, exalts the dignity of human nature, while mourning over its fall. We may, he says, "collect the excellency of the understanding then, by the glorious remainders of it now, and guess at the stateliness of the build-

ing by the magnificence of its ruins." "And certainly that must needs have been very glorious, the decays of which are so admirable. He that is comely when old and decrepid surely was very beautiful when he was young. An Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam, and Athens but the rudiments of paradise."

A man who had thus signalized himself both by his powers and his loyalty could not escape notice and preferment. In 1663, he was made prebendary of Westminster; in 1670, canon of Christ Church, Oxford. In 1677, he accompanied, as chaplain, Lawrence Hyde, the son of Clarendon, sent by Charles the Second as ambassador to Poland. On the 30th of April, 1668, we find him returned, and preaching at Oxford. In his sermon on Christ's Promise the Support of Ministers, he has some remarks which seem directed against Jeremy Taylor. He recommends plainness and simplicity of speech to the minister, and, alluding to St. Paul's mode of teaching, he says, — "Nothing here of the 'fringes of the North Star'; nothing of 'nature's becoming unnatural'; nothing of the 'down of angel's wings,' or the 'beautiful locks of cherubims'; no starched similitudes, introduced with a 'Thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion,' and the like. No, these were sublimities above the rise of the apostolic spirit. For the Apostles, poor mortals, were content to take lower steps, and to tell the world in plain terms, that he who believed should be saved, and that he who believed not should be damned." There is a good deal more about gaudery, frisking it in tropes, fine conceits and airy fancies, shooting over men's heads while professing to aim at their hearts, — all of which might seem to have been levelled at Taylor, by one whose energetic and fiery spirit could ill brook the "process of smoothness and delight" by which the sweet poet of theology would draw men into heaven. South, also, in this sermon, darts with his usual practical acuteness on the motives which animated many of the opponents of the church in their dolorous complaints. When they desire to get the clergy under their feet, then the clergy are too high and proud. "When avarice disposes men to be rapacious and sacrilegious, then forthwith the church is too rich." And when, by gaming and revelling, these same men have disabled themselves from paying their butchers, brewers, and vintners, "then immediately they are all thunder and lightning against the intemperance and luxury of

the clergy, forsooth, and high time it is for a thorough reformation."

In 1681, South preached before the king, at Westminster, his sermon on All Contingencies directed by Providence. In this discourse, he referred to the impossibility of foreseeing the tremendous results of small things on the stability and happiness of states ; and, after giving two instances drawn from history, he exclaimed, — " And who that had beheld such a bankrupt, beggarly fellow as Cromwell first entering the Parliament House with a threadbare, torn cloak, and a greasy hat (and perhaps neither of them paid for), could have suspected, that, in the space of so few years, he should, by the murder of one king and the banishment of another, ascend the throne, be invested in the royal robes, and want nothing of the state of a king but the changing of his hat into a crown ?" Charles laughed heartily at this, and said, turning to Hyde, — " Ods-fish ! your chaplain must be a bishop ; therefore put me in mind of him at the next death." It was the misfortune of South to preach his doctrines of passive obedience, and God's particular care of kings, in the reign of a good-natured rascal, who had not a single quality of majesty to sustain the theory of the divine by the example of the monarch. South seems to have been ambitious rather to be the champion of the church, than to enjoy its high and lucrative offices. He repeatedly declined preferment. In the reign of James the Second, though he disliked the measures of that monarch relating to Popery, he would not oppose him, and, when pressed to sign the invitation to the Prince of Orange, steadily refused. After the revolution, he rather submitted to the new government than acknowledged it. He might have had one of the vacant bishoprics, had he pleased ; but he felt too strong a sympathy with the nonjurors to step into any of their late offices. The rest of his life was spent in the same unwavering devotion to the church which had characterized his youth and manhood. He opposed all measures to produce a union of dissenting Protestants, that involved the slightest sacrifice of the forms and ceremonies of the church. He died July 8, 1716, after a long life of intellectual labor. His biography is to be read in his sermons. In them are chronicled the results of his studies, the opinions he entertained of men and measures, the thoughts he grasped in contemplation, the passions he felt in actual life ; and on them is impressed the undeniable marks of the daring, straightforward character of the man.

In both his life and writings, South presents himself as a man of more than ordinary dimensions. His understanding was large, strong, and acute, grappling every subject he essayed to treat with a stern grasp, and tearing and ripping up, with a peculiar intellectual fierceness, systems and principles which contradicted his own. He possessed a constant sense of inward strength, and whatever province of thought he willed to make his own always yielded to his unceasing and unwearied effort. Difficulties and obstacles, in conception or expression, instead of daunting him, only seemed to rouse new energies of passion, and set his mind on fire. Many sentences in his works seem torn from his brain by main strength, expressing not only the thought he intended to convey, but a kind of impatient rage that it did not come with less labor. He wrote probably from his own consciousness, when he represented study as racking the inward and destroying the outward man, as clothing the soul with the spoils of the body; "and like a stronger blast of lightning, not only melts the sword, but consumes the scabbard." And again, in another connection, he calls truth a great stronghold barred and fortified by God and nature, and diligence, the understanding's laying siege to it. "Sometimes it thinks it gains a point; and presently again it finds itself baffled and beaten off; yet still it renews the onset; attacks the difficulty afresh; plants this reasoning and that argument, this consequence and that distinction, like so many intellectual batteries, till at length it forces a way and passage into the obstinate inclosed truth that so long withstood and defied all its assaults." To great sharpness and penetration of intellect, which pierced and probed whatever it attacked, he joined a peculiar vividness of perception, to which we can give no more appropriate name than imagination. In almost every subject which he treats, he not merely reasons powerfully, but he sees clearly; and it is this bright inward vision of his theme that he most warmly desires to convey to the reader. Like every truly great thinker, he thinks close to things, without the intervention of words, and masters the objects of his contemplation before he seeks to give them expression. His style, therefore, has singular intensity, vitality, and richness. It expresses not only the thought, but the thought as modified by the character of the thinker. In this respect, he is among the most original of writers.

His commonplaces never appear echoes of other minds, but truths which he has himself seen and proved. The strange and strained conceits, the harsh metaphors, which, when tried by general principles of taste, must be conceded to disfigure many of his sermons, are still legitimate offsprings of a mind passionately in earnest to fix and express some "slippery uncertainties," some fugitive and elusive thoughts, whose bright faces shone on his mind but a moment, and then flitted away into darkness. The coarse expressions and comparisons in his writings are also indicative of his impatience at all coquetry with language, and his disposition to give things their appropriate garniture of words. If the expression disgusts, the object of the preacher is attained, for disgust at the expression is naturally transferred to the thing which he desires to make disgusting. Thus, when he wishes to indicate the disproportion between the pleasures of the thinking and the eating man, he represents them to be as different "as the silence of Archimedes in the study of a problem, and the stillness of a sow at her wash." Again, when he desires to make graphically evident that pleasure is merely a relative term, and consists in the suitableness of objects to varying conditions of character, — that what is pleasure to one man is pain to another, — he declares that "the pleasures of an angel can never be the pleasures of a hog." His works would furnish numberless instances of the same felicity of vulgar allusion. Indeed, he lived among a generation of sinners, whose consciences were not assailable by smooth circumlocutions, and whose vices required the scourge and the hot iron. South vividly perceived the baseness and contemptible nature of sin, through all the gilded shows in which it was incased, and could draw from natural objects no images which he thought too foul and hateful to picture it to the imagination.

The intensity of feeling and thinking which burns throughout South's writings has no parallel in English theology. It resembles the unwearied fire of the epic poet. If it had been allied to a shaping and fusing imagination, like that of Milton, the Puritans would not perhaps have produced the only great poet of that age. As it is, we doubt if, in the single quality of freshness and force of expression, of rapid and rushing life, any writer of English prose, from Milton to Burke, equalled South. In him, this animation is not confined to particular

passages or sermons, but glows and leaps through the whole body of his writings. His vast command of language, and his power of infusing the energy of his nature into almost every phrase and image, would make his sermons worthy the attention of all students of expression, even if they were not fascinating for their brilliant good sense in questions of social morals, and the vigor of intellect brought to the discussion of controverted points in theology and government.

The wit of South is bountifully sprinkled over his sermons, and it is by this quality that he is most commonly known. He uses it often as a gleaming weapon of attack and defence. It is, however, no light and airy plaything with him, but generally a severe and masculine power. It gleams brightest and cuts sharpest, when its possessor is most enraged and indignant. Though sometimes exhibited in sly thrusts, shrewd innuendoes, insinuating mockeries, and a kind of raillery, half playful and half malicious, it is more commonly exercised to hold up adversaries to contempt and scorn, to pierce iniquity and falsehood with shafts that wound as well as glisten, or to evade logical dilemmas by lightning-like transference of an analogy of fancy for one of the reason. In many cases, it makes his understanding play the part of a partisan, on subjects where it is abundantly able to act the judge. So fertile was South's mind in ingenious turns, quirks, and analogies, that an epigram often misled him from his logic ; and to fix an unanswerable jest upon an opponent was as pleasing as to gravel him with an unanswerable argument. Thus, the Puritanic party were continually putting forward the phrase *liberty of conscience* as the object of their struggles. A mind like South's would evade the justice of such a plea somewhat in this wise. Conscience would suggest piety and honesty. Now among the Puritans were many notorious hypocrites and sharpers. The cry of conscience, of course, would be with them a mere disguise for selfish objects. Consequently, what the Puritans wanted was not *liberty of conscience*, but *liberty from conscience*. The inward delight following such a dexterous turn of words, embodying a principle but partially true, would prevent South from pursuing the subject farther, or rescuing his argument from the fallacy into which it had been seduced by epigram. Most of his sermons bearing upon dissenters and republicans swarm with sophisms of a similar character, in which there is just enough truth to give

a practical application to the shining edge of the wit. A party, however, which had all its badges and watchwords so caricatured or distorted, would find it more difficult to gain proselytes, than if the falsehood of its principles had been demonstrated by unimpeachable arguments.

Yet, with all his understanding, learning, and wit, South was a fanatic and a bigot in every thing which concerned church and state. To the dominion of a few contemptible maxims, which we can hardly conceive the feeble intellects and abject spirits of Charles's courtiers to have honestly admitted, did this independent, dogmatic, fierce, and defying controversialist surrender his splendid talents and accomplishments. It is difficult to believe that his mind voluntarily submitted to this slavery, though there is no evidence that it was not self-imposed. The only explanation we can give is, that his nature early received a strong bias, by the pressure of external circumstances, towards the royal cause. He was naturally exceedingly sensitive to the ridiculous side of things, and naturally impatient and choleric. To a man thus constituted, a prejudice imbibed against the persons connected with a cause is equivalent to a hatred of the cause itself; and when this prejudice deepens into a principle, large powers of intellect more readily subserve than oppose it. Now, South saw the ridiculous and selfish side of Puritanism and its affiliated political doctrines, with the keenest glance. He had frequented the conventicles in his youth. All that was grotesque, presumptuous, ignorant, cruel, senseless, and hypocritical, in the different sects of the time, he had seen embodied in appropriate persons. The "blessed breathings," the "heavenly hummings and hawings," the various transparent veils through which hypocrisy is visible to the eye of wit, were familiar to his mind. He must gradually have formed the opinion, that the whole movement with which these were accidentally connected was one of mingled knavery and folly, and could end only in the destruction of social and religious order. If, instead of imbibing his first impressions of civil and religious liberty at the time of Cromwell, he had lived in an earlier day, and been one of those who met at Lord Falkland's house, with Selden, and Chillingworth, to discuss the constitutionality of the latest act of the king, or the sanity of the latest foolery of Laud, his mind would never have been forced into the vassalage of such degrading errors as it

ultimately defended. As it was, however, the man of intelligence scoffed at the narrowness, the man of learning at the ignorant fanaticism, and the man of wit at the costume and affectations, of the enthusiasts whom he daily met, without considering that their cause was the cause of English liberty, and their madness the result of ecclesiastical tyranny. With these impressions of the Puritans, it was natural that he should be shocked at "such a pack of incendiaries" assuming to be ministers of the gospel, and, as it appeared to him, preaching schism, lecturing men into sacrilege, praying them into rebellion, beheading princes, and overthrowing a church and monarchy which seemed strong with the strength of a divine right. At the restoration of Charles the Second, it was natural, too, that he should be drunk with loyalty, in common with other men of a less fiery temper and less determined prejudices. That he was honest in his bigotry, there can be little doubt. His sermons are the heartiest compositions of the time. He continually gives evidence of a spirit which would not hesitate to fight or die for the wretched principles he esteemed. In some way or other, he had connected the office and person of king with the most awful objects of his reverence, and, as a reasoner, became utterly insane when their sacredness was brought in question. Dogmatic and authoritative by nature and education, he hardly comprehended the meaning of toleration in matters of religion. Against every thing which militated with the doctrines or ceremonies of his church, he hurled his anathemas, or shot his sarcasms. Socinians and atheists he considered identical, and he wonders, in one of his discourses, that the diabolical impiety of the former, in their notions about the future state of the wicked, had not been visited with condign punishment at the hands of civil justice. Popery and puritanism were also identical. "They were as truly brothers as Romulus and Remus. They sucked their principles from the same wolf." The courage with which he uttered his extreme opinions was of that kind which would have sustained him at the stake. "Were it put to my choice," he says, "I think I should choose rather, with spitting and scorn, to be tumbled into the dust in blood, bearing witness to any known truth of our dear Lord now opposed by the enthusiasts of the present age, than, by a denial of those truths, through blood and perjury wade to a sceptre, and lord it on a throne." He speaks of

bad men as those who blaspheme God, revile their prince, *and the like*, — placing these sins on a level. In almost every case in which he refers to Charles the First and the Parliamentary party, he utters hardly a word of history. He can see nothing but perfection in the king, nothing but villainy in those who opposed his treachery and tyranny. Faction and rebellion, by which he means opposition to the monarch, he denounces as the worst of sins in his own age, — an age which he confesses to be supernaturally expert in all sin's excesses and inventions. In his sermon on Education, a sermon which contains many admirable and comprehensive ideas, he makes undeviating loyalty to the king one of the chief doctrines to be woven into the minds of youth. Still, on all subjects where his political and religious bigotries do not warp his judgment and blind his perceptions, the capacity of his mind for the investigation of truth is splendidly shown. It would be easy to condemn his fanaticism by principles gathered from his own writings, when his mind had free scope, and was not haunted by the ghostly names of church and king. The wonder of the reader is, as he peruses South's clear exposure and energetic denunciation of the various forms of sin and error, that a man so skilled in detecting the slightest departure from virtue should have been so incapable of applying his principles to the acts of his bosom's idols.

The depravity of morals and manners during the reign of Charles the Second has never been depicted with more force of coloring than by South. Here none of his hatreds interfered to bias his mind, except his laudable hatred of sin and wickedness. Never were debauchees and criminals exposed to a more merciless storm of ridicule and execration, than when he poured on them the flood of his mingled contempt and wrath. His invective lights on every rank and degree beneath royalty, and there are sentences in his sermons, which, if not aimed at the king, seem to strike him none the less. Thus, he says, "A corrupt governor is nothing else than a reigning sin; and a sin in office may command any thing but respect." Again, he declares it a "strange and shameful thing to have vice installed, debauchery enthroned"; and it is this very strange and shameful thing which shocks every student of the reign of Charles. It is, however, upon the dissolute nobility, statesmen, and men of wit and pleasure about town, that our stern

divine expends most of his sarcasm and denunciation. His sermons swarm with severe and pointed rebukes of these. The scandalous and enormous impiety, the unparalleled wickedness, of his age are constant subjects of his virtuous honor and his epigrammatic rage. If we take his description of the time as accurate, we should adopt an opinion regarding the "blessed restoration" of Charles the Second by no means flattering to monarchy. We will give, mostly in his own sharp words, gathered from different portions of his writings, what South himself taught as the character of his age.

Blasphemy, irreligion, and debauchery were the prime characteristics of all men of wit and fashion. Their ambition was to reach daring heights in sin. They were such as broke the mounds of all law, such as laughed at the sword of vengeance which divine justice brandished in their faces; and laid their hearts open, like broad and high roads, for all the sin and villany in the world freely to pass through. Vice walked about with bare face and brazen forehead, looking down with scorn upon virtue as mean and contemptible. Practised sinners threw off the restraints of religion as pedantry, narrowness, and the infusions of education, affecting a superiority in villany to the fops, their ancestors, and, not content with distinguishing themselves as laborious drunkards, dexterous cheats, or sly adulterers, were earnest to set off all other sins with the crowning perfection of complete atheism. So confident were men in sin, that it was as if they had come to dare and defy the justice of Heaven, to laugh at right-aiming thunderbolts, to puff at damnation, and, in a word, to bid Omnipotence do its worst. The age groaned under a company of lewd, shallow-brained puffs, wretches who seemed to have sinned themselves into another kind of species, and who made contempt of religion the badge of wit, gallantry, and true discretion. These fellows bore a peculiar stamp of impiety, and appear to have formed a kind of diabolical society for finding out new experiments in vice. They laughed at the dull, inexperienced, obsolete sinners of former times, and scorning to keep within the common, beaten road to hell, by being vicious only at the low rate of example and invitation, they aimed to search out other ways and latitudes, to oblige posterity with unheard-of inventions and discoveries in sin. Some persons were so unspeakably bad, that the Devil him-

self could neither make nor wish them worse. Parents set the worst example to their children ; and many children of high families were not so much born, as damned, into the world. Sin, by being impudently defended, and confidently practised and countenanced by the noble, fairly got the victory over virtue. It rode on successfully and gloriously, lived magnificently, and fared deliciously every day. Nay, so far were men from sneaking under their guilt, that they scorned to hide or hold down their heads for less crimes than many others have lost theirs for. The example of the great takes away the shame of any thing they are observed to practise, though never so foul and shameful. No man blushes at the imitation of a scarlet or purple sinner, though the sin be of the same color. A vice *à la mode* will look virtue itself out of countenance, and out of heart too. Men love not to be found singular, especially where the singularity lies in the rugged and severe paths of virtue. So, in this age of grown and improved debauchery, the countenance given to vice by the nobles corrupted all classes. Places of honor were allotted to the base and wicked ; one to a murderer, a second to an atheist, a third to a parasite. The great objects of the politician were plunder and official station. His maxim was, that, however fond priests may talk, there is no devil like an enemy in power, no damnation like being poor, no hell like an empty purse. All sacrifice for general objects he considered a piece of romantic melancholy unworthy a shrewd man, who was to look upon himself as his prince, his country, his church, nay, as his God. If he were called a traitor and a villain, he looked upon such terms as the mere declaimings of novices and men of heat, whose whole portion and inheritance is a freedom to speak. Women, in their shamelessness, at last became ashamed of nothing but to be virtuous or to be thought old. If they were asked the reason of their assuming such reckless liberty, they would reply, it was the mode ; “the genteel freedom of the present age, which has redeemed itself from the pitiful pedantry and absurd scrupulosity of former times, in which those bugbears of credit and conscience spoiled all the pleasure, the air, and the fineness of conversation.” The king’s mistresses were openly visited by the great and the honorable. All possible courtship and attendance was thought too little to be used towards these infamous and odious women, who were fit to be

visited by none but God himself, who visits after a different manner from the courtiers of the world.

Literature, also, was deeply tainted by the corruption of the times. Bad authors abounded, the Devil's amanuenses, and secretaries to the Prince of Darkness, who provided monstrosities of impiety and wickedness, which the people devoured, with the fire and brimstone flaming round them, and thus as it were digested death itself, and made a meal upon perdition. The sins of these infamous authors outlived themselves ; for a bad writer sins in his grave, corrupts others while he is rotting himself, and has a growing account in the other world, after he has paid nature's last debt in this ; and, in a word, quits this life like a man carried off by the plague, who, though he dies himself, yet does execution upon others by a surviving infection. In such traders for hell as these the nation abounded ; wretches who lived upon other men's sins, the common poisoners of youth, equally desperate in their fortunes and manners, and getting their very bread by the damnation of souls.

This is the representation South gives of his age, mostly in his own nervous language. He compares the monstrous increase of vice to the breaking of a sea upon the land, and affirms it too powerful to be within the reach of human remedies ; to be entirely remediless, " unless the great Governor of the world, who quells the rage and swelling of the sea, and sets bars and doors to it, beyond which the proudest of its waves cannot pass, shall, in his infinite compassion to us, do the same to that ocean of vice which now swells and roars, and lifts up itself above all banks and bounds of human laws ; and so, by his omnipotent word, reducing its power, and abasing its pride, shall at length say to it, ' Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.' "

In all his sermons relating to life and practical duty, in exposing the delusions of the passions, in ripping up the " concealing continents " of vice and error, in lashing sin and assisting struggling virtue, in the sharp analysis of all those thoughts and feelings which tend to deaden the conscience, South is eminently powerful, brilliant, and excellent. He is never misled by any sentiment or sentimentality from the direct path of virtue and truth. He calls every thing by its right name, and uses as little toleration to sin as to dissenters. His sermons on Covetousness, Education, Shamelessness in

Sin, Envy, the Misapplication of Names, Hypocrisy, Resignation, Prayer, Fasting, and many others, are full of admirable thoughts, expressed with a never-flagging life, directness, and splendor of language. His writings teem with important truths, sharpened into epigrams or maxims. Thus, speaking of the heart, he says, — "None knows how much villany lodges in this little retired room." In exposing the sin of intemperance, he quaintly remarks, — "The conscience cannot stand up, when the understanding is drunk down. He who makes his belly his business will quickly come to have a conscience of as large a swallow as his throat." In another connection he remarks, — "It was the sop that slid the Devil into Judas, and the glutton that ushered in the traitor." Pride he defines to have been the "Devil's sin and the Devil's ruin, and has been ever since the Devil's stratagem ; who, like an expert wrestler, usually gives a man a lift before he gives him a throw." He is full of sly allusions to his time. Grub Street, with its squalor and bailiffs, was probably in his mind, when, in speaking of extemporary prayers, he remarked, God does not require us "to beg our daily bread in blank verse, or show any thing of the poet in our devotions, but indigence and want." At times his comparisons are arguments. Thus, he says finely of innocence, that "it is like polished armor ; it both adorns and defends." In referring to dunces occupying prominent situations, he tells them, — "If owls will not be hooted at, let them keep close within the tree, and not perch upon the upper boughs." Again, he states the emptiness of fame, in a fine allusion : — "Those that are so fond of applause while they pursue it, how little do they taste it when they have it ! Like lightning, it only flashes upon the face, and is gone ; and it is well if it does not hurt the man." It is rare that we see a great truth more pertinently expressed than this : — "Guilt is that which quells the courage of the bold, ties the tongue of the eloquent, and makes greatness itself sneak and lurk, and behave itself poorly." Joy, when perfect, he remarks, does not break out in violent eruptions, but "fills the soul, as God does the universe, silently and without noise." In his sermon on Resignation, he anticipates Byron's line on man, —

"Degraded mass of animated dust," —

calling the human being, as opposed to the divine, an "aspir-

ing lump of dirt"; and again, "a pitiful piece of animated dirt." To be angry under the dispensations of Providence he declares the height of folly as well as wickedness. "A man so behaving himself is nothing else but weakness and nakedness setting itself in battle-array against omnipotence; a handful of dust and ashes sending a challenge to all the host of heaven. For what else are words and talk against thunderbolts; and the weak, empty noise of a querulous rage *against Him who can speak worlds, who could word heaven and earth out of nothing, and can when he pleases word them into nothing again?*" In a sermon on Education he speaks of some schoolmasters as executioners rather than instructors of youth, and remarks that "stripes and blows are fit to be used only on those who carry their brains in their backs." He calls the hypocrite a "masquerader in religion, as ever still dodging and doubling with God and man, and never speaking his mind, nor so much as opening his mouth in earnest, but when he eats or breathes." Of the old, impotent, silver-haired sinner, "the broken and decrepit sensualist, creeping, as it were, to the Devil on all four," he says that he is "a wretch so scorned, so despised, and so abandoned by all, that his very vices forsake him." The covetous man he probes in this wise: — "The cries of the poor never enter into his ears; if they do, he has always one ear readier to let them out than the other to take them in. He is a pest and monster, greedier than the sea, barrener than the shore." And further on he says, — "God may smite thee with some lingering, dispiriting disease, which shall crack the strength of thy sinews, and suck the marrow out of thy bones; and then what pleasure can it be to wrap thy living skeleton in purple, and rot alive in cloth of gold, when thy clothes shall serve only to upbraid the uselessness of thy limbs, and thy rich fare stand before thee only to reproach and tantalize the weakness of thy stomach, while thy consumption is every day dressing thee up for the worms?"

Several of South's sermons are devoted to peace. In these he gives a masterly reply to all the arguments urged in favor of duels and revenge. Of the successful duellist he says, — "How fares it with him in the court of conscience? Is he able to keep off the grim arrests of that? Can he drown the cry of blood, and bribe his own thoughts to let him alone? Can he fray off the vulture from his breast,

that night and day is gnawing his heart, and wounding it with ghastly and amazing reflections ?” One of his most magnificent images, conveyed with a rolling grandeur of expression, is devoted to the illustration of the seeming strength a revengeful spirit acquires from resistance. “As a storm could not be so hurtful, were it not for the opposition of trees and houses ; it ruins nowhere, but where it is withstood and repelled. It has, indeed, the same force, when it passes over the rush, or the yielding osier ; but it does not roar nor become dreadful, till it grapples with the oak, and rattles upon the tops of the cedars.” Every one will confess that these extracts are in a higher strain of rhetoric than is commonly heard from the pulpit. They are not, however, isolated beauties, culled from a wide waste of verbiage and triteness, but characteristics of South’s general style of thought and expression. His sermons are full of them ; every page sparkles with wit, or glows with eloquence.

In reading the writings of a man evincing so much reach of thought and strength of nature as South, we cannot but be impressed with the injustice done to his talents, and to those of many other English divines, in the scale of precedence established among English authors. Thus, almost every commentator on English literature refers to Dryden’s prose works, as evincing the relative perfection to which style had arrived in the age of Charles the Second. Men like Fox and Canning have expressed a fanatical admiration of his choice of terms and his powers of composition. Fox would not admit a word into his history of James the Second which had not been sanctioned by the use of Dryden. Yet, if any essay of Dryden be compared with a sermon by South or Barrow, both his contemporaries, no practised eye could fail to discern its inferiority in force, clearness, compactness, and richness of diction, as well as in depth and fertility of thought. We can account for this superior reputation enjoyed by a really inferior prose-writer, only by supposing that mere men of letters are indifferent to theological literature, and imbued with a prejudice that sermons afford little scope for originality, eloquence, wit, and the exhibition of striking traits of individual character ; and this prejudice we conceive to have arisen, in no slight degree, from the pious dilutions and debilities served weekly in this age from so many pulpits, by persons styled ministers of the gospel.

It receives no support from Taylor, Chillingworth, Hall, South, Barrow, Butler, Newman, and Channing, — men separated from each other by as marked peculiarities as distinguish any celebrated poets and essayists, and from whose sermons alone an argument might be drawn for the vigor and versatility of the human intellect, and the exhaustless wealth of expression contained in the English language. Their purely literary merit places them far above many popular writers, who have had the luck to obtain a full recognition of their talents, by studiously disconnecting them from virtue and religion.

This indifference to the treasures of thought and expression which lie unworked in the mines of old English divinity we deem an evil of some magnitude, as it indicates a decline in the standard by which theological literature is now tried. It is very easy to say, that this indifference is to be attributed to sin and worldliness in men; but those most likely to urge this explanation had better decide first how much of it is due to mediocrity and dulness in preachers. It seems to us that theology is fast falling behind the other professions, in regard to the character and intelligence demanded in its professors. Depth, comprehension, a large knowledge of life, skill in dissecting evidence and motives, a general force of being which never yields to moral or intellectual timidity, are not now insisted upon as necessary to the clergyman. The toleration awarded to feeble sermons is the sharpest of all silent satires on the decline of divinity. Forcible men, men possessing sufficient vigor and vitality to “get along in the world,” rush almost universally into the other professions. Law and politics, in this country, draw into their vortex hundreds of scholars who ought to be preachers of God’s word both to law and politics. If a youth of education does not evince enough understanding to sift evidence or tear away the defences of a sophism, — if he lacks sufficient nerve to badger a witness or amputate a leg, his parents think him eminently calculated for that other profession, whose members are to scatter the reasonings of Hume and Diderot, to smite wickedness in high places, to lay bare the baseness of accredited sins, to brave with an unflinching front the opposition of the selfish and the strong, and to dare, if need be, all the powers of earth and hell in the cause of justice and truth. This, we need not say, is

all wrong. If the powers of darkness and delusion are strong in all the strength of bad passions and sophistical vices, let them be opposed by men whose spirits are of the "greatest size and divinest mettle"; by men who have the arm to smite and the brain to know; by men whose souls can thrird all those mazes of deceit through which sin eludes the chase of the weak in heart and the small in mind. Without force of character, there can be no force of impression. Words never gush out with persuasive or awful power from a feeble heart. Timidity, learned ease, a command of certain forms of expression, faith in terms, are characteristics of too many men, whose mission is to save souls by courage, activity, and power of conceiving and expressing truth. Since the clergy have lost the hold upon the mind given by superstition, have they sustained their legitimate influence by mental and moral power? Dry and dead matter of fact, or thin dilutions of transcendental sentiment, are the last things to effect this object, and yet they seem the first things which our modern soldiers of the cross grasp with their trembling fingers. The object, indeed, requires, that a good portion of the mind and genius of the land should be enlisted in the ranks of theology. We want neither ignorant fanaticism nor intelligent *nonchalance*.

This tameness of spirit is fast extending to doctrine and practice. A spurious toleration and liberality have supplanted the old earnest zeal. We live in an era of good feeling. The word unmentionable to ears polite burns the fingers of those who should launch it at sin. The meaning attached to the phrases of God's wrath and justice shocks our modern sensibilities. Sorrow and love are the two aspects under which the Deity is now contemplated. The terrors and threatenings of the law are hidden in a rose-colored mist of rhetoric. The great object of the age is to remove every thing from the surface of society which offends the eye of refined taste. Spiritual sins have been withdrawn from the front rank of transgressions, and sins of the senses promoted to their place. Every person of stern force of character rides over the clergy. A man who gets inflamed with any earnest thought speeds from his denomination, to rave men into some new heresy. As it would be intolerant to say that he was presumptuous or infidel, he is to be treated with the utmost politeness, or with a mild and whining

opposition ; and even this inoffensive ineffectiveness of admonition, this chiding in the nerveless terms of a canting toleration, does not prevent its object from setting up as a martyr, and expending his inward agonies constantly in the public ear. The difference between the ancient and modern martyr is the difference between being raked and scathed by "balls of consuming wildfire," and being gently peppered by popguns. To escape the imputation of bigotry, preachers slide softly into the opposite stupidity of indifference. The effect which inward sin has in shaping opinions few hardly dare to analyze. A strong, hardy, wholesome zeal, intimating a living belief in the importance of any particular set of doctrines, and a thorough-going force of soul in their promulgation, careless of the melodious whine of the mild, and the more dissonant yell of the bad, — this is becoming disgracefully rare.

It is easy to calculate the effect of such timidity and weakness on the literature of theology. The mediocrity of sermons cannot be laid to their subjects. Nothing can be clearer than that divinity affords the widest scope for the most various powers and accomplishments, and presents the strongest motives to their development and cultivation. In the literature of every age, theology should assert its grandeur and power, in masterpieces of thought and composition, which men of letters would be compelled to read, in order to deserve the name. Eloquence on almost every other subject is but a species of splendid fanaticism. It exists by detaching from the whole of nature and life some special thing, and exaggerating it out of its natural size and relations to produce a transient effect. But to the preacher, philosophy and eloquence are identical. His task is to restore the most awful of all realities to its rightful supremacy, — the dominion it enjoys according to the Heaven-ordained laws by which the world was made. The written and spoken literature, which is the record of this eloquent wisdom, should be characterized by the first and greatest merit of composition, vitality. It is this vitality, this living energy, this beating of the brave heart beneath the burning words, which gives immortality to every thing in literature that survives its generation. Strange that it should be most wanting in those compositions where it would be most naturally sought ! There is more of it in many a speech by

some political enthusiast, thrown off to save a party measure, than in many a sermon by some clerical icicle, intended to save a human soul. Sydney Smith, at the commencement of the present century, described the current sermons of his own church as being chiefly distinguished by decent debility ; and we have repeatedly waded through sermons, on the most kindling and soul-animating themes, without being able to realize that the writer had any soul. Heaven and hell, righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come seemed to excite in him no more inspiring emotions than might have been raised from meditating on the mutations of trade. As it is unfortunately impossible for dulness at this day to shield itself from criticism, by tossing the names of scoffer and atheist at the critic, we humbly suggest that it would be wiser to elude the charge by infusing more energy and unction into the thing criticised. And we know of nothing more calculated to produce this desirable effect, than the study of a few sermonizers like South, and a hearty emulation of their learning and power ; and in all discourses, on all subjects, to recollect that "no man's dulness can be his duty, much less his perfection."

ART. III. — *Carolina Sports, by Land and Water ; including Incidents of Devil-Fishing, &c.* By the HON. WILLIAM ELLIOTT, of Beaufort, S. C. Charleston : Burges & James. 1846. 12mo. pp. 172.

IN returning through South Carolina, a few years since, from a long journey in the Southern States, after some adventures by flood and field that might make a book, if we were disposed to write travels, our early associations and happy recollections of college life were suddenly roused by the appearance of the author of the book before us on the opposite side of the dinner-table at a hotel. Although five-and-twenty years had passed away, since we looked up to him as one of an advanced class at Cambridge, distinguished by his rank as a scholar, and equally so by his readiness at all manly exercises, his fresh and vigorous appearance brought to memory the remark of John Randolph of Roa-

The Factory System in its Hygienic Relations: an Address delivered at Boston, at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Medical Society, May 27, 1846. By John O. Green, M. D. Boston: Published by the Society. 1846. 8vo. pp. 34.

European Agriculture and Rural Economy, from Personal Observation. By Henry Colman. Vol. II. Part VI. Boston: A. D. Phelps. 1846. 8vo. pp. 104.

Reply of J. P. Kennedy to the Review of his Discourse on the Life and Character of Calvert, published in the United States Catholic Magazine, April, 1846. Baltimore: John Murphy. 1846. 8vo. pp. 32.

Discourse on the Life and Character of Sir Walter Raleigh; delivered by J. Morrison Harris, before the Maryland Historical Society, May 19, 1846. Baltimore: Published by the Society. 1846. 8vo. pp. 71.

An Address delivered on laying the Corner-Stone of the Linnæan Hall of Pennsylvania College, July 23, 1846. By S. S. Haldeman, A. M. Gettysburg: H. C. Neinstedt. 1846. 8vo. pp. 12.

Prisons and Prisoners. By Joseph Adshead. With Illustrations. London: Longmans. 1845. 8vo. pp. 320.

A Greek-English Lexicon, based on the German Work of Francis Passow. By Henry George Liddell, M. A., and Robert Scott, M. A. With Corrections and Additions, and the Insertion in Alphabetical Order of the Proper Names occurring in the Principal Greek Authors. By Henry Drisler, M. A., Adjunct Professor of the Greek and Latin Languages in Columbia College, New York. New York: Harper and Brothers. 1846. 8vo. pp. 1705.

Progress, a Satirical Poem. By J. G. Saxe. New York: John Allen. 1846. 8vo. pp. 32.

Astronomical Observations made at the Naval Observatory, Washington. By Lieut. J. M. Gilliss, U. S. N. Washington: Gales and Seaton, Printers. 1846. 8vo. pp. 671.

ERRATA.

Page 295, 11th line from the bottom, for "his doctrines" read "its doctrines."

" 296, 18th line from the bottom, *dele* "But."

" 298, 17th line from the top, for "modest" read "utmost."

" 307, 5th line from the top, for "honor" read "horror."

" " 12th line from the bottom, for "puffs" read "huffs."

The statement on page 390, that manuscripts of the Gospels written in the age of the first Christian Emperor are even now extant, is perhaps made with too little qualification. It is true that some critics ascribe both the *Alexandrine* and the *Vatican* manuscripts of the Gospels to the fourth century, in the early part of which Constantine flourished. But others, with more reason, do not give them a higher antiquity than the fifth century.